THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN

GHANA

FOREWORD

After more than a decade of economic decline and political unrest, Ghana in 1983 embarked on an economic recovery programme that represented a radical departure from the status quo. Along with bold economic reforms, the government vowed to decentralize decision-making to promote more participatory development in neglected rural areas.

In recent years, Ghana has made remarkable headway in turning its economy around. The challenge it now faces is ensuring that this growth is sustained—and translated into improved living conditions and wider opportunities for all Ghanaian people.

Supporting Ghana in this ambitious task is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the main planning, funding and co-ordinating organization for technical co-operation in the UN system. UNDP's Ghanaian programme has two main objectives: to strengthen planning and management capabilities at the central and local levels, and to devise new ways of empowering rural communities to take charge of their own development.

Most of UNDP's resources are directed to the planning effort. This includes projects in every major sector, 22 in all. They range from assessing manpower needs for primary education to devising a country-wide transport strategy, and from reorienting the nation's approach to health to developing viable agricultural policies. Central to all these efforts is an innovative attempt to change the way development is planned: Rather than starting at the top and trickling down, planning will begin at the grassroots and move up a chain of command.

The following is an overview of Ghana's struggle to reconstruct, highlighting just a few of the many UNDP-supported activities now underway. ■

Yaro Budu Stores

MAKING TOUGH ADJUSTMENTS: GHANA STRUGGLES TO RECONSTRUCT

The mood in Ghana today is one of cautious optimism. Recovering from famine in northern, drought-stricken areas and an almost total economic collapse, Ghana has sustained a growth rate of more than five per cent a year since 1983, one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. It has become a model for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because it is one of the few countries where structural adjustment policies have been vigorously pursued and are now showing tangible results. Donors from industrialized countries searching for a solution to the conundrum of African economies, are pouring huge amounts of aid into this small West African nation.

But while all agree that conditions here have improved, the majority of Ghanaians still don't have

Entrance to the Kumasi market.

Improving agriculture is a cornerstone to economic recovery in Ghana.

money enough to buy the imports that only recently began filling the shops. Economists are worried about the slow drop in inflation and difficulties in promoting private investment.

In 1957, Ghana was full of hope as the first African nation to achieve independence. With over 60 per cent literacy, the ex-British colony was one of the most advanced nations on the continent. Ghana produced ten per cent of the world's gold, had about US$1 billion in reserves and a per capita income roughly that of Spain. But starting in the late 1960s, following a succession of coups, conditions deteriorated.

By 1983, public transportation ground to a halt for lack of fuel and spare parts. Factories were running at one-tenth capacity. Hospitals were without supplies. On top of this came the worst drought in Ghana's recent history, accompanied by widespread bushfires, and the expulsion of a million Ghanaian workers from nearby Nigeria.

Paralyzed for lack of funds, Ghana that same year launched an economic recovery programme which was used as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the World Bank and the IMF. It embraced a mixed market economy, dismantling the centralized approach adopted by former governments. At the same time Ghana's head of state, Flight-Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, vowed to reactivate Ghana's rural economy as an essential first step towards generating sustained growth. Among the changes was a decision to decentralize the development planning system—a move strongly supported by UNDP.

Ghana's economic reforms echo many of those prescribed by overseas financial institutions. The government has devalued the currency, ended most price controls, liberalized trade, reduced subsidies, permitted the privatization of state-owned enterprises and embarked on extensive redeployment of state employees.

Efforts are underway to ease the burden of structural adjustment on those most vulnerable.

But these measures were not adopted wholesale. The country's leaders had a clear sense of what was required—and what would be supported by the people. A government information campaign clearly articulated why sacrifices were necessary and, thus far, Ghana has been spared the often violent backlash that has accompanied structural adjustment programmes elsewhere.

The results have been impressive. Cocoa exports nearly doubled in the last five years due to a tripling of prices paid to farmers by the state Cocoa Marketing Board. Inflation has slowed to 25 per cent a year, down from 123 per cent in 1983. Arrears in foreign payments have been virtually eliminated, and the balance-of-payments is in an overall surplus.

But statistics do not necessarily reflect improvements in the human condition, says one World Bank official. Well aware of continuing hardships, Ghana became the first country in Africa to launch what it calls a Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment. Known as PAMSCAD, the programme attracted $85 million from foreign donors and has set a precedent for economic adjustment programmes elsewhere. PAMSCAD projects are all geared to ease the suffering of the most vulnerable. They range from a low-cost human waste management project in Kumasi to labour-intensive public works and large-scale retraining of former civil servants—activities backed by both the World Bank and UNDP.

The government has also initiated a bold new strategy to reshape the way planners are attempting to put long-term, people-centred development back on track. "In 1983 there was no development planning at all. It was what you would call crisis management or fire fighting," says Donald Pearson, chief technical adviser to a national development planning project supported by UNDP. "What the government did was to

Ghana's economic reforms aim to spur local initiative and small-scale enterprises.

turn all its macro-economic policies and its planning system around."

Toward this end, almost 70 per cent of UNDP's resources for Ghana—$40.2 million over five years—are currently being directed to the planning effort. The aim is to reinvigorate the planning process and to move policy-making into a front and centre role.

The keystone is a $2.4 million project that is turning the former central planning system upside-down, starting at the grassroots and encouraging interactive planning at the district, regional and national levels.

Development priorities, such as whether to build roads, dig wells or construct health centres are being decided by communities themselves, based on a general policy framework issued by national authorities. These priorities will then be approved by elected officials in each of the country's 110 districts, passed on to one of ten regional co-ordinating councils, and eventually submitted to a newly established National Development Planning Commission.

Integrating fiscal plans and recommendations from sectoral ministries, the Commission will prepare a national development plan that takes into account spatial considerations as well as social and macro-economic implications of future spending. Responsibility for implementing projects will be left in the hands of sectoral agencies and local authorities, who will administer proportionate shares of the country's financial resources.

Although sustained economic recovery and a fully operational planning system are long-term prospects in Ghana, both have been accorded the highest political backing. After years of hard work, the new National Development Planning Law was recently approved by Ghana's Provisional National Defence Council, and elections for new district assemblies were held in 1988 and 1989. With UNDP assistance,

The largest market in Ghana is in Kumasi, in the Ashanti Region.

mobile planning teams are now active in all ten regions of the country to fine tune the skills of local planners and other officials.

"Some other African countries are said to have decentralized systems," says Mr. Pearson, who has worked in nearly every Anglophone country on the continent. "But what they have are people operating at the district level who are agents of the central government, rather than genuine local representatives. If this new system works," he adds, "it will be a first for Africa." ■

STARTING FROM THE GRASSROOTS

For the people of Essam, life in 1983 is impossible to forget. "There was no fuel for transportation, so we walked 14 kilometres in the scorching sun in hopes of finding a bar of soap or a tank of kerosene," says Joseph Oduro, a teacher and secretary of the local development committee. "Our only thought at the time was that we must do something to help ourselves."

A community of 22 villages, Essam is a very different place today. It has built a community centre housing a health clinic, bank, post office, guest house, library and meeting hall. Other self-help activities are also blossoming here, including the construction of an access road, the digging of ten wells, the development of soap and brick-making industries and the establishment of a housing co-operative.

Opening ceremonies for the community centre in Essam.

Small industries, such as this one processing palm kernels for oil, are sprouting up in Essam.

Essam is part of a pilot project supported by UNDP and the UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to test new ways of developing local level planning skills in the Eastern Region of Ghana. Though its achievements are exceptional, they are also proof that, given proper technical support, communities themselves are the best judge of their own problems and how to solve them.

Driving along the rugged dirt road that leads to Essam, Yefusa Okulo-Epak, the project's chief technical adviser, explains the pitfalls of planning in isolation. He points to a nearby hospital that is without electricity and running water because the Department of Health neglected to co-ordinate its activities with other government bodies.

Mr. Epak's primary role was to help create prototype planning systems at the district and regional levels, and to support Essam and another community in carrying out a number of concrete projects. By the time the project ended in late 1989, previously non-existent planning data had been collected from 80 departments in two pilot districts, and a long-term development plan produced by and for the people of Ghana's Eastern Region. Nearly 800 people received training—from community leaders and heads of district and regional departments to 40 members of a mobile planning team that are now circulating around the country. They learned how to set priorities, draw up development budgets and work closely with neighbouring towns and districts.

Despite considerable obstacles, Mr. Epak is excited about the enthusiasm the project has generated. "As soon as we can lay a base for the decentralization process, it will work," he says. "Whether or not there will be sufficient resources to do that nation-wide is a different question."

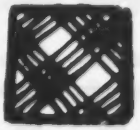
Most rewarding, he says, were the changes he saw in Essam when people realized the impact the projects

"For people living in Ghana's villages, government has always been an abstraction, something outside of themselves. What we are trying to do through decentralization, through the community of Essam, is to help people create something that they themselves will maintain."

—Fred Ohene-Kena,
Regional Secretary of the PNDC
for Ghana's Eastern Region

would have on their own lives. Community workshops explaining decentralization—including its benefits and responsibilities—reached more than 10,000 villagers. Among the most effective methods of communication used was evening video showings of training sessions carried out during the day.

"Our relationship with other villages has changed for the better," says Mr. Oduro. "We used to see each other only at funerals or other special occasions. Now we are interested in establishing linkages. We learned that if you want development, you have to join hands." ■



PROVING THE POTENTIAL OF GHANA'S SMALL FARMERS

The rains have brought a cool respite from the relentless sun in the village of Adidwan. Seated amidst great piles of maize are the women of the village. As they peel away the thickly layered husks, they marvel at the generosity of the harvest.

In contrast with other parts of Ghana, where food imports have continued to rise, the achievements of Adidwan are remarkable. Maize production here has nearly tripled in the last two years—from two to two-and-a-half bags per hectare to an average of six. Net farm incomes rose to more than 23,000 cedis per hectare in 1988, compared to a loss of 1,200 cedis per hectare in 1984–85.

Along with another farmers co-operative in Ghana's Ashanti Region, Adidwan is part of a closely watched experiment to prove the potential of Ghana's small farmers. Through this pilot project, supported by UNDP and the Food and Agriculture Organization of

the UN, common constraints to production—including lack of credit, seeds, fertilizers and storage facilities—were overcome. Among the project innovations was a restructuring of the co-operative societies to distribute responsibilities among farmers and encourage greater participation. A revolving fund for credit was also established, with a repayment rate to date of 100 per cent.

While solving transport and marketing problems will still require concerted government action, the project did succeed in convincing policy makers and planners that supporting small farmers—above all, women—can indeed yield high returns. Other donors, including the World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the African Development Bank, are now interested in employing the same strategy nation-wide. ■

Husking maize in the village of Adidwan.

ome to
ROMAN 3:-3
GOD BE
UT I DO NOT FOLLOW WHAT I AM.
THE YOUNGER YOU ARE - THE HARDER YOU FIGHT
Never Too Young
मुद्रित

PLANNING FOR A NATION'S CAPITAL

Nima is regarded by many as one of the poorest slums in Africa. This community of 80,000 migrants in Ghana's capital, Accra, is divided by Nima "creek," a broad open sewer that bubbles with organic wastes and spills over into nearby homes during the rainy season.

Outfitted in sturdy rubber boots, a group of formerly unemployed Nima residents have begun to dredge the creek as part of a PAMSCAD initiative financed by the World Bank. But the effort only scratches the surface of the city's more deeply-rooted problems. Water and sanitation facilities are grossly inadequate. Few roads penetrate the dense collection of handbuilt homes. There is one health clinic and 13 schools.

Development in Nima, as in Accra as a whole, has

Street life in one of Accra's slums.

City planners are now taking into account a large informal sector—made up of thousands of entrepreneurs like this cloth seller (left) and hardware vendor (right).

been hampered by inadequate planning and lack of co-ordination among the 22 government agencies, 35 quasi-governmental agencies and 40 foreign donors currently involved in the city's growth. Typically, says Brian Roberts, who heads up a major urban planning project for Accra supported by UNDP and Habitat, funding runs out before projects are completed. "The result is that somebody sets out a number of plots. The water goes in, but no roads. Three years later the roads go in, and eventually the sewerage. But in the process, the water pipes are ripped out because nobody knows what has been done previously."

A new $1.6 million urban planning project, started in January 1988, is an attempt to eliminate such costly mistakes. One of the first of its kind in Africa, it aims to bring a rational and comprehensive approach to Accra's development over the next two decades. In that time the city's current 1.6 million population is expected to more than double. Unlike past planning efforts, this one takes into account the informal economy—street vendors, migrant workers, thousands of entrepreneurial enterprises outside the tax rolls. Together they account for nearly half Accra's total employment.

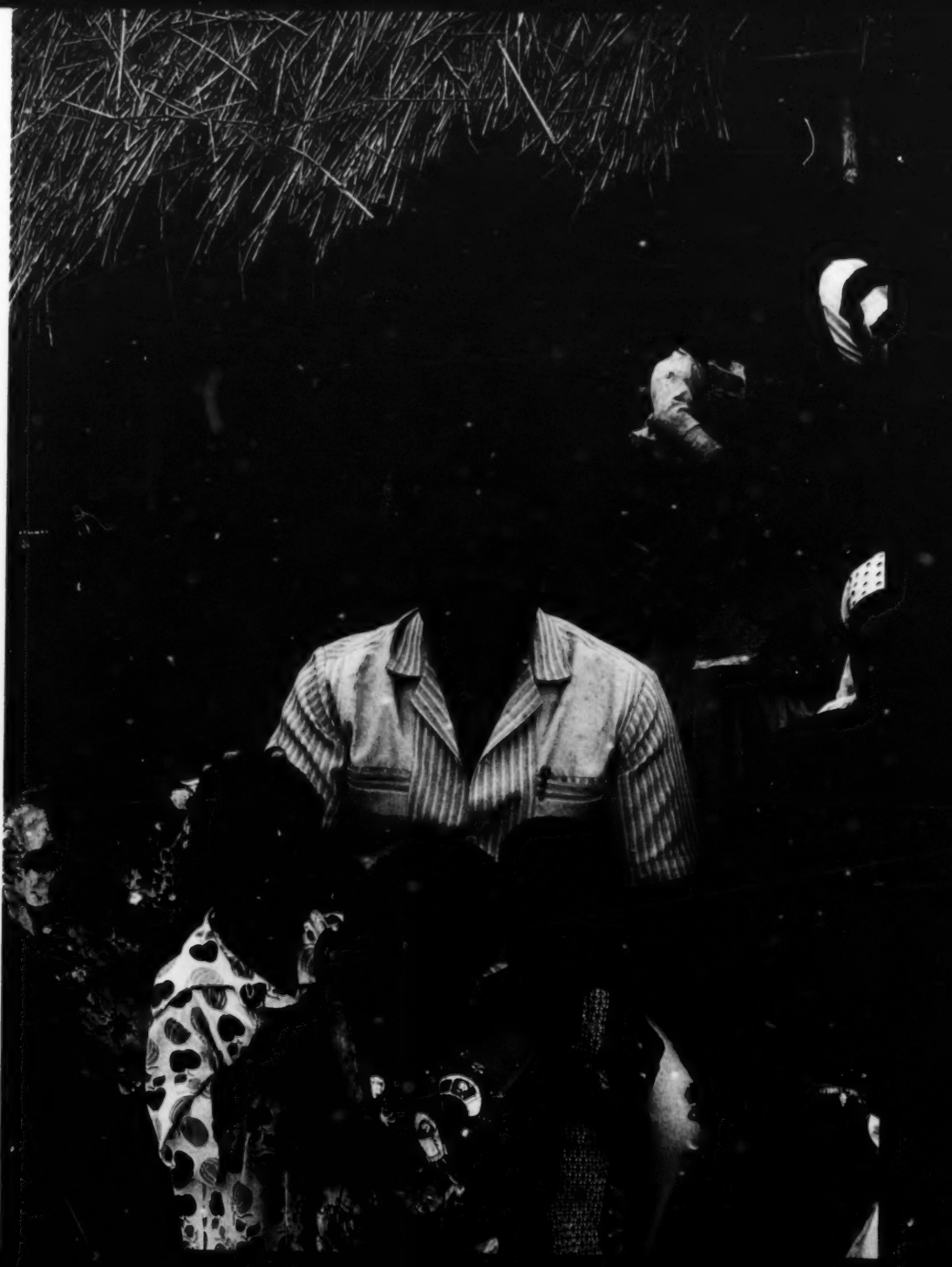
This "master" plan for Accra will be broken down into five-year development programmes. Annual action plans, which will be reviewed and budgeted at the end of each year, break the process down into even more manageable segments. A number of tangible improvements are already underway, including a housing project in the inner city and the redistribution of public markets to ease traffic congestion. A Metropolitan Development and Planning Authority is being set up to co-ordinate planning and development efforts city-wide.

An important component of the urban plan is a prospectus of investment opportunities. Overseas donors are often short of good projects to invest in, says Mr.

Roberts, simply because they lack critical information. The result has been poorly conceived projects, or projects that contribute little to the overall development of the city. The prospectus will provide detailed information on a project's anticipated returns. It will also analyze its potential contribution to economic development or human well-being.

Good planning demands an accurate assessment of what already exists, and to this end, an inventory of existing facilities and services is being compiled for every section of Accra, including Nima and other areas of extreme poverty. This urban data base is being expanded by national consultants who are assessing housing, traffic and transport, urban services, employment, industry and commerce, socio-economic conditions, land use and the environment. All of this information will be made available to government agencies as well as to local businessmen, who are often willing and anxious to invest, but lack the information required for proper marketing research.

Accra faces daunting problems. But they are now being addressed in a realistic and workable manner. "The plan we are devising is based not on what we would like to have happen, but what is actually achievable," says Mr. Roberts. "My professional opinion is that if we can do something with Accra now, we won't—like many other African cities—have reached the point of no return." ■



Dr. E. O. Laryea is the founder of the May Day Rural Health Project.

SUPPORTING NGO INITIATIVES

Frustrated by bureaucracy, E.O. Laryea (centre), a doctor and specialist in public health, left his job at a government ministry in 1980 and started his own practice. Despite a limited income, and while supporting a family of his own, he was able to donate time and money to setting up a small health clinic in a village outside Accra, whose inhabitants, all subsistence farmers, were without any health services whatsoever. Dr. Laryea has since trained seven villagers in the basics of primary health care and in developing community organizing and leadership skills. The team is now providing basic health services to 60 surrounding villages. Last year, the May Day Rural Health Project, headed by Dr. Laryea, received a grant of $3,000 from UNDP's Partners in Development Programme, which is promoting the activities of local voluntary groups involved in grassroots development efforts. "The community is beginning to understand what we are trying to do," says Dr. Laryea. "We have succeeded in creating a certain awareness." ■

RESTORING A NETWORK OF ROADS

Throughout Ghana, more than 21,000 kilometres of secondary roads crisscross the countryside. However, since independence the majority of these feeder roads have steadily deteriorated. By the late 1970s, their condition had become so bad that neither food nor export crops were reaching the cities. At one point, when transportation by truck in famine-stricken northern areas had become impossible, Flight Lieut. Rawlings launched a personal appeal asking students to carry bags of cocoa—Ghana's most valuable export crop—to market.

By the mid-1980s, in an effort to revitalize the rural economy, restoring Ghana's transportation network became a government priority. With $100 million in funding from the World Bank, four large highway pro-

Roads are lifelines in rural Ghana.

Involving local villagers in restoring Ghana's feeder roads has proved to be an enormous success.

jects got underway. The smallest and most innovative of these is a pilot project to rehabilitate Ghana's feeder roads, which is receiving technical support from UNDP and the International Labour Organisation.

The beauty of the project, carried out in three districts in the Ashanti Region, is that road improvements are being done by hand rather than with large, costly machinery, thus giving a boost to rural employment and incomes. While labour-intensive road reconstruction has been carried out successfully in other developing countries, the project in Ghana was the first to involve private rather than government contractors. The results, says Peter Bentall, chief technical adviser to the project, exceeded anyone's expectations. Contracts for the rehabilitation of 175 kilometres of gravel roads were all completed on or close to schedule, with no technical difficulties and with enormous enthusiasm from the local community.

"We certainly did not expect that every contractor hired would be so committed, or so quick in realizing the potential of the whole thing," says Mr. Bentall.

One of the keys to the project's success was a 23-week training programme, which focused not only on the requisite technical skills but also on management and supervisory techniques that could be applied to other areas. Seven small, local contractors were hired to rehabilitate a total of 25 kilometres over a year's time, at a cost of 2.4 million cedis, or about $10,000 per kilometre of road. Each contractor paid salaries, board and lodging for four supervisory staff to attend the training course. Each supervisor, in turn, managed up to 50 hired labourers in addition to a tractor, trailer, handtools and other equipment leased to each contractor. For periods of three to four months, close to 1,500 labourers from nearby villages were employed and paid the equivalent of $1 a day.

Many of the labourers, one-third of whom were

The end of the road: the marketplace.

women, had never before had a source of disposable income. Yet studies suggest that between 50 and 80 per cent of monthly earnings have been invested for the future. Salaries were put into housing improvements, children's education, or in buying cocoa trees or farming tools. Others bought sewing machines. Apart from this, there was time and effort saved, mainly for women who previously had to walk five to seven kilometres to the main road to bring their crops to market.

While the involvement of the community in road rehabilitation has been extremely positive, finding a system for maintaining the roads on a voluntary basis is proving more difficult. Currently, the project is focusing on developing community participation by establishing road maintenance committees at the district, area and village levels.

Due to the success of this pilot project, discussions are underway with the World Bank for reproducing the project nation-wide. Training programmes have already been completed for an additional 21 contractors in the Ashanti Region, and a new feeder roads project has started under PAMSCAD in Ghana's Eastern Region that will train eight more. ■

BUILDING ON GHANA'S HUMAN RESOURCES

Sweeping reforms have taken place in Ghana since it launched its economic recovery programme in 1983. And while a large pool of skilled Ghanaian consultants are available to help implement these changes, they are often jobless, unable to compete with highly experienced foreign experts.

In January 1989, UNDP launched a four-year, $1 million project to help develop the local consulting industry in Ghana. The goal is to build up Ghana's human resources and reduce the number of foreign consultants, who today are providing the bulk of expertise. In 1987-88, for example, 95 per cent of the 5,975 work-months of technical assistance to Ghana were provided by outside experts—at a cost up to ten times higher than that of employing local personnel.

Under the project, various consulting groups from both the public and private sectors—including architects, engineers, agronomists, management consultants and economists—have been joined under one umbrella association. Consultancy centres have been established in Ghana's three main universities, which will develop a data bank of human resources for private and public institutions as well as international organizations seeking advisory services.

As a result of the project, and attention from the local media, use of national expertise by donor agencies, including UNDP, has stepped up. In ongoing UNDP-funded projects, for example, about 50 per cent of all work-months now approved for subcontract will be filled by Ghanaians. Eight UNDP-funded projects are currently managed by local personnel. ■

Produced by the UNDP Division of Information, in collaboration with the UNDP office in Ghana, June 1990.

Text and photographs by Lois Jensen.

Design by Mary Vengrofski

World Development
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017